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## IMPORTANCE OF THE SCIENCE AND OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PREHISTORIC ANTHROPOLOGY.

BY THOMAS WILSON.

Prehistoric Anthropology is a new science. During the past eighteen hundred years the Christian, and consequently the civilized world, has, until the beginning of the nineteenth century, lived on in the belief that man's appearance upon earth dated no more than 4,000 years before the commencement of our era, and it was without knowledge of the prehistoric man, nor did it have a suspicion of his existence.

The wise men of Denmark in the early part of the nineteenth century, while studying the characters engraved on their runic stones and the legends in their sagas, discovered evidences of a human occupation of their country earlier than any of which they had heretofore known or suspected. This occurred about 1806, and in 1836 Mr. Thompson, the renowned Danish archæologist (who founded and for fifty years directed the prehistoric museums at Copenhagen), published his first memoir in regard to prehistoric civilizations, which he named after the material principally employed for cutting implements, "The Ages of Stone, Bronze and Iron." These divisions have ever since been universally accepted.

In 1854 Dr. Ferdinand Keller recognized at Meilen, on Lake Zürich, Switzerland, certain evidences which developed into our present knowledge of the Swiss Lake Dwellers, although it has since been proved that lake-dwellings existed in many other countries in Europe.

Beginning with 1841 M. Boucher de Perthes, residing at Abbeville on the river Somme, discovered certain flint implements rudely chipped in the shape of an almond or peach stone with the cutting-edge at the point. He had found them deep in the gravelly terraces of the river Somme, and in such position and association as to force the conclusion that they

were the handiwork of man and of an antiquity before unsuspected. He continued his labor, gaining converts with indifferent success, until the year 1859, when, by agreement, a committee of fifteen gentlemen, supposed to be the best qualified for the task, and in their departments certainly the most learned men of France and England, met on the ground to make personal investigations. After discussion, dispute, and difference of opinion, of which I need not speak here, it was finally decided that M. Boucher de Perthes was correct in his theory, and that these implements were the work of men and of an antiquity heretofore unknown.

Here was born the new science of Prehistoric Anthropology, and since then it has not only become recognized as a science, but whenever and wherever studied and understood it has increased in dignity and importance.

I said a few lines back that the civilized world had, until the beginning of the nineteenth century, lived without knowledge of the prehistoric man and without even a suspicion of his existence. This is more true in Europe than in America. The knowledge of prehistoric man began on this continent several hundred years before it did in Europe. Columbus formed his acquaintance on the discovery of America. The white men on arriving beheld the prehistoric man face to face, and had ample opportunities for knowing, studying him, and finding out everything that was discoverable from contact with him. Though many books have been written about the prehistoric man of America, and their authors have described him as they saw him, yet we know but little of his true nature. The scientific study of this subject has begun only of late years, and we are still ignorant concerning his history or life prior to the discovery of America in 1492; whence he came, to what race he belonged, or what were his habits, customs or monuments. We are even wanting in knowledge of those things peculiar to him since that time, and which have been manifested to us in every period of our contact with him. The study of his language, sociology, religion, mythology, has just commenced. Many men have written descriptions of their visits to the Red Man of North America, have given his-

stories of their travels, and have written entertaining books on the subject; but these have largely been fugitive, isolated and without connection with any other than the tribe visited, the voyage described, or the travel undertaken. Nor was there any connection proposed between these writers who might have taken up the same line of investigations with other tribes or other parts of the country. I would not dwarf or belittle the labors or discoveries of our pioneers, but conceding for them all that their friends can claim, they have done but little towards giving an accurate anthropological and ethnological history of the North American Indians. As to their history in prehistoric times, before Columbus, no attempt was made by these historians. Collections have been made of the implements of the North American Indian, and large prehistoric museums established in nearly all parts of the United States, beginning back a hundred years or more, which are and will be of great interest and value in writing such a history. But in the majority of these cases the work has been that of collectors, sometimes for commerce, but more often to gratify that thirst for things of antiquity which seems to be second nature of mankind. A study of anthropology will scarcely be claimed by any one as the motive on which these collections were based. So, while we have had an earlier knowledge in America of prehistoric man, yet it has not attained to that dignity and importance as a science as it has in Europe.

The Smithsonian Institution, National Museum, Bureau of Ethnology, Peabody Museum, and several other institutions whose names will occur to the reader, are exceptions to this statement. The number of private persons who are giving serious attention to this science and are doing faithful and valuable work in this connection are increasing every year. My remarks have not been intended as any reflection upon them or as criticisms of their methods, but are aimed at that great body of persons who, interested or pretending to be interested in the study of anthropology, are naught but collectors of Indian relics, who gauge the value of their specimens, if not solely from a monetary point of view, from their number, beauty, and rarity. They do not count their collections as

of value to the sciences or as an aid in solving the great problem of prehistoric man, but regard them as so many trinkets to gratify their own pride or excite the envy of their less fortunate neighbors.

I have considered as part of my duty the endeavor to awaken and elevate the public mind to the importance of the science of prehistoric anthropology, to so far as possible prevent the search for Indian relics as a matter of commerce, and cause collectors to regard these objects in their true light as aids to science, not as gewgaws and trinkets.

In the performance of this duty I have, during the past year, delivered ten public lectures, distributed from my office a thousand or more copies of Circular 47, descriptive of the prehistoric exhibit at the Cincinnati Exposition that has a bearing in this direction, and my Handbook of Prehistoric Anthropology, No. 743, which, it is to be hoped, will not be without effect.

There has also been prepared a circular (No. 49) relating to prehistoric anthropology and containing information for the guidance of explorers and collectors.

Despite the fact that the discovery of prehistoric man in Europe was made so many years, possibly so many hundreds of years, after his discovery in America, yet I am compelled by the facts to declare that Europeans, because of their interest in the new science, have established prehistoric anthropology on a much broader basis and a firmer foundation, and have given to it more thorough and scientific treatment than has been done in the United States. If I make a comparison in this regard between the two countries as to the detriment of our own it will only be that we may benefit thereby, may take warning and so redouble and direct our efforts, using the opportunity and material which we have in such improved methods and increased endeavors that in future years the difference will not be to our disadvantage. If the following statements will direct the attention and increase the energy of our scientists to proper exertion in this regard I shall feel amply repaid for my labor.

Our acquaintance with the aborigines of this country began with Columbus in 1492, but the real history and our first actual knowledge of them began no earlier than 1600, probably 1604 or 1608, now only 280 years since. Americans, therefore, of the present day, are only removed from the prehistoric man of the whole country by that period, nor is it even so long for this was the commencement of our knowledge. The authors at that time saw him face to face, were able to describe, and wrote their histories of him. He has continued with us ever since, and we have from that time to the present had full and ample opportunity to increase our information concerning him by investigation, examination and personal contact.

In France and England, in fact over Western Europe, the period when the last possible contact with prehistoric man could have taken place, the time when all our knowledge concerning him acquired from observation ended with the invasion of Cæsar. So that while the American has not to go back farther than 280 years to study the prehistoric man of his country, and has had him present ever since, the Englishman and Frenchman has to go back nigh 2,000 years; and their opportunities of personal contact ended then if it had not before. It is not at all certain that the Gaul and Briton of that epoch is the real prehistoric man. He may have been related to him, possibly his descendant, but it appears that the prehistoric bronze age had practically ended in that country, and the iron age begun from four to nine hundred years before the advent of Cæsar.

I have said this much to show the difference in the respective opportunities for the study of prehistoric man between Europeans and Americans.

The territory of France is about 200,000 square miles; that of the United States is about 3,600,000, eighteen times larger than France. Mile for mile and acre for acre, the United States will yield as much to the student of prehistoric archæology as will that of France, yet with this difference in area of equal fruitfulness, the United States government is far behind that of France in its interest and assistance given to this science.

Compare the National Museum of France, to wit, that of St. Germain, with my department of the National Museum of the United States. The St. Germain Museum is installed at St. Germain-en-Laye, a few miles out of Paris, in the palace of that name, built by Francis I. I have not the exact dimensions, but it is in the form of a triangle. The front or shortest leg is, I should say, 400 feet long. It is given up entirely to the officers of the institution, and the chambers are living apartments of the officers. The other leg of the right angle has been fire-proofed throughout and completely restored, and it now consists of exhibition halls. This restoration is being continued upon the other wing. The work began in 1879 and is not yet completed. The building is four stories high, and there are now twenty-five halls filled with prehistoric objects open to the public. One entire story is devoted to each the paleolithic and neolithic periods of the stone age, and one to the bronze age, while the basement contains the heavy stone principally architectural monuments of the Roman occupation. Except in the latter, the display made, the objects shown, the epochs, periods, or ages represented, are the same as those now crowded into my one hall. With all her wealth of antiquity, with all the extent of territory, eighteen times greater than of France, the United States devotes to the objects and implements of her prehistoric races less than one-eighteenth part of the museum space occupied by France.

In the management and direction of this museum and of the matters pertaining to this new science there exists about the same difference. The Director of the Museum of St. Germain is a member of the Institute, and approximates in the dignity and importance of his position, to that of the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and Director of our entire National Museum. The work belonging to our Bureau of Ethnology is in France committed into the hands of a commission of savants, to which M. Henry Martin, the great French historian, was and M. Gabriel de Mortillet, Depute is the chief.

I shall not attempt to compare the work of this commission with its representative in the United States, but I may indi-

cate the difference when I say that the monuments belonging to the prehistoric age which are attached to the soil and part of the real estate, which have been purchased, restored and are now owned by the Government of France are to be numbered by the hundred.

The Department of Prehistoric Anthropology in the British Museum has for its curator a person, eminent in the ranks of the science, who receives a salary of fifteen hundred pounds per annum, equal to \$7,500, a greater sum than is expended in any one year for my entire department. \$6,000 are set aside yearly for purchase of specimens.

The Museum of the Irish Academy of Dublin possesses a greater value in prehistoric gold ornaments alone than it has cost the United States for our entire Museum with all its specimens, service, management and furniture.

The Prehistoric Museum of Antiquities at Edinburgh, Scotland, is also extensive. It is devoted exclusively to the antiquities of its own country and forms a complete museum of itself. It has for curator and staff, Prof. Anderson; Dr. Arthur Mitchell and Mr. Black, names that stand as high in their science as do any others of their country in any science.

The Prehistoric Museum at Copenhagen is so extensive and rich that it might be classed as one of the wonders of the world. It occupies the entire Prinsens Palais, has eight exhibition halls, with a full corps of professors, curators, etc., who occupy the highest ranks in science. The riches of this museum are almost beyond computation; 10,000 polished stone hatchets and axes, the contents of eleven workshops, one of which alone furnished 200 hatchets, 58 perforators, 4,000 scrapers, 1,426 arrow-heads, *trenchant transversal*. Fifty-one cases of bronze implements and ornaments, gold objects so numerous and valuable that kept, of course, during the day under lock and key, they are taken out each night and stored for safety in an immense steel safe.

Stockholm has a National Museum devoted entirely to pre-historics, for which the government has organized a bureau and erected a fine museum building, with Messrs. M. Hilderbrand as curator and M. Montelius as assistant.



The University of Lund devotes the basement story to its prehistoric museum, with Prof. Soderberg for its professor and lecturer.

The University of Upsala, one of the finest and oldest in all Europe, is engaged in the same direction.

The University at Christiana, Norway, has the same kind of arrangement. Rygh and Undset are its professors. An idea can be had of the importance with which this prehistoric science is viewed in this country when I say that while the Numismatic Museum at Christiana possesses a finer collection of United States coins and medals than does our National Museum, yet their desire to keep their own antiquities is so great that they refuse to exchange them for those of any foreign country.

The mention of these Scandinavian museums with the names of some of their professors will give but a faint idea of the dignity which has been accorded to the science of prehistoric anthropology in these countries, and the attention which it has there received. These countries are entitled to the priority of discovery of prehistoric man, and they have maintained a leading place in the science. So much so that he who was its acknowledged head in Europe and the world, Worsaae, was taken into the King's Cabinet and served the latter years of his life as Minister of Public Instruction.

I need not mention the great prehistoric museums of Germany. That at Berlin with Virchow, probably the leading anthropologist of the world, at its head, Dr. Johanas Ranke at Munich, and so they are dotted over the country in every city from the Baltic to the Alps.

Much might be expected from Switzerland, for it is the land of the prehistoric lake dwellers, and she has not disappointed our expectations. Bern, the capital, has no less than three governmental prehistoric museums; one belonging to the Republic was purchased by it lately from Dr. Gross, of Neuveville, for the sum of 60,000 francs. The canton and the city each own a museum of no mean extent, where are gathered and displayed all objects found in the neighborhood. The other cities and cantons of Switzerland are equally alive to

the importance of this science, and equally active in its study and pursuit. Geneva, with Dr. Gosse at its head, Lausanne, with Morel-Fatio, Yverdon, Neuchatel, Bienville, Steen, Constance, Zürich, all are active, energetic and industrious in gathering the objects in their vicinity, in enlarging their museums, in instructing the people, and in the general increase and diffusion of knowledge concerning their prehistoric ancestors and people.

The same story may be said with regard to Italy. Genoa, Pisa, Turin, Milan, Verona, Vicenza, Parma, Regio, Bologna, Imola, Marzabotta, Florence, Arretzo, Cortona, Perugia, Chiusi, Corneto, all possess extensive museums, and so down to Rome, where are to be found three or four great governmental establishments organized with presidents and professors, and approaching the dignity of institutes and colleges with museums attached, all devoted to the study of antiquities almost, if not quite, prehistoric.

This list might be extended indefinitely. Austria, Hungary, Pologna, Russia, are all interested in this new science and are devoting themselves to the spread of its knowledge and to the increase of their museums.

I have failed largely in the purpose if before this time I have not convinced the reader that the United States, both government and people, have not been aroused to an appreciation of this new science and have not attached to it the importance which it receives in other countries.

*(To be continued.)*